

Reviewer Report

Title: Wikipedia: why is the common knowledge resource still neglected by academics?

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Reviewer name: Thomas Shafee

Reviewer Comments to Author:

This is a clearly written and timely commentary. It posits that academic engagement in Wikipedia is below where it should be, and speculates on the main reasons why (with the author's opinions on appropriate rebuttals). The author has been appropriate in using recent references (since Wikipedia changes relatively rapidly) and older references are interpreted in context.

My only major comment is that the issue is still presented as static. Has Wikipedia's quality changed over time? Have the reasons for its neglect also changed, or remained static? It may be worth separating in the "historic bias" paragraph which points are relevant to bias from long-term historical perceptions on what constitutes authority, or from shorter-term perceptions based on Wikipedia's early reputation.

Background

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P2: It may be worth noting that there is considerable variation in quality between articles within languages.

P2: "even in very specialized topics" should be qualified as either in "many specialized topics" or "often in". There have been sources that have found against Wikipedia's quality in some cases. It is also worth noting that the references supporting accuracy in specialised topics often focus on more highly-trafficked pages. Nevertheless, the majority of Wikipedia articles remain 'stub' or 'start' quality level.

Main text

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P1: The authors make a good point that the 'anyone can edit' nature can cause suspicion in academics. Is there any known correlation between more-edited articles and accuracy?

P1: The argument that vandalism that is not immediately picked up by bots is mainly obvious and doesn't misinform readers is a risky. I think it would be more appropriate to reverse the sentence and note the machine learning and human editor patrols first (and hence the fast reversion rates), then concede that the sorts of vandalism that passes through may misinform readers but is orders of magnitude rarer.

P3: It may be worth noting that the normal reliance on author credentials/reputation for authority is compensated for by the deliberate mechanism of heavy emphasis on reliable sources and verifiability as Wikipedia's foundation of authority.

P3: It may also be worth noting that despite the 'anyone can edit' fear, more-edited articles are actually typically more accurate (Per Wilkinson and Huberman 2007. "Cooperation and quality in wikipedia").

P4: May be worth emphasising academic honesty and transparency. Perhaps the taboo should be more accurately be against citing only wikipedia.

P6: Not only "paragon of scholarly effort" but transferable information literacy skills.

Conclusions

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The conclusions are a fair summary of the main points of the commentary.

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